



MEDIA RELEASE

STATE OF TENNESSEE
DEPARTMENT OF TOURIST DEVELOPMENT

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
APRIL 22, 2004**

**CONTACT: MARK THIEN
(615) 741-9010 (office)
(615) 418-5752 (cell)**

TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF TOURIST DEVELOPMENT LAUNCHES STATE-OF-THE-ART NEWS BUREAU

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (April 22, 2004) -- The Tennessee Department of Tourist Development is unveiling a state-of-the-art, technology-driven News Bureau to take the state's tourism industry news stories to local, regional, national and international media.

The Department's News Bureau will assist the tourism industry from the smallest operator, event or attraction to the largest in packaging their news stories and distributing them to media around the country and throughout the world. Located online at www.tenntravelnews.com, the News Bureau will be the media's one-stop source for tourism-related news and story ideas. The Web site goes online April 23.

Tourist Development Commissioner Susan Whitaker traveled to nine cities across the state last week to give tourism industry members a first look at the News Bureau initiative. During the meetings, Whitaker detailed the program, how the industry could take part and the importance of the News Bureau to the department's marketing efforts.

"The establishment of the Tennessee Tourism News Bureau is an important initiative of this department," Whitaker said. "It is a non-traditional, innovative approach to promoting Tennessee tourism-related news, offering expert tourism sources, photography and video for local, regional national and international media."

The new initiative will reach beyond typical travel writers and editors to generate non-traditional tourism news and features for television, radio, newspaper, Internet and magazine outlets.

"There are hundreds of great stories relating to Tennessee tourism that are not being told," said Phyllis Qualls-Brooks, the Department's Assistant Commissioner of Marketing. "That's because many organizations simply do not have the resources to get the word out to the right reporters. The purpose of the News Bureau is to find, package and distribute the unique stories that might not otherwise find their way to a reporter or producer who wants to hear about them."

In addition to the national media relations component, the News Bureau also will focus on helping industry members tell their stories to local and regional media within a 200-mile radius to build traffic for their attractions or events. For example, a tourism industry member can register with the Web site and submit a news release or news idea that the Bureau's staff will develop and distribute electronically or via fax to all appropriate media outlets within the

- MORE -

RACHEL JACKSON BUILDING, 5TH FLOOR
320 SIXTH AVENUE NORTH
NASHVILLE, TN 37243
615.741.9001



MEDIA RELEASE

STATE OF TENNESSEE
DEPARTMENT OF TOURIST DEVELOPMENT

TENNESSEE LAUNCHES TOURISM NEWS BUREAU

Page 2

200-mile radius of the news event or attraction. The Bureau will then email a copy of the release and media distribution list back to the originating tourism member.

Whitaker said when the News Bureau launches at www.tenntravelnews.com on April 23, tourism industry members may begin submitting news releases, features and story ideas to the Bureau's staff. The Bureau is one of the department's seven initiatives created to increase tourist traffic in Tennessee and to enhance the state's image as a tourist destination.

"This is a creative way to look beyond traditional travel writers to a wide array of media outlets including radio, television, magazines, newspapers and the Internet to get the word out about Tennessee's tourism stories," Whitaker said. "However, for this initiative to work, it will take ongoing input from our industry members from around the state."

Tourism is one of Tennessee's largest industries, employing more than 173,000 individuals and generating nearly \$10.3 billion in direct revenues last year. The state is home to numerous international attractions, including the Grand Ole Opry, Graceland, the Jack Daniel's Distillery in Lynchburg, National Civil Rights Museum, The Tennessee River Freshwater Pearl Farm, the Country Music Hall of Fame, Dolly Parton's Dollywood theme park, the Memphis Zoo, the Bristol Motor Speedway, and many others.

Quotes from tourism industry professionals in Tennessee:

"Commissioner Whitaker and her staff are to be commended for having the vision to place Tennessee tourism in a more competitive stance to the national media. The News Bureau concept allows attractions such as the National Civil Rights Museum to get vital information disseminated, practically guaranteeing national and international coverage that we couldn't consistently achieve before." **Gwen Harmon, Marketing/PR Director – National Civil Rights Museum, Memphis**

"This is incredible to me because it's been a hard struggle to move forward as a small county even though we're surrounded by a lot of people. The News Bureau will be a great help to us out here." **Joyce Sewell, President – Grainger County Chamber of Commerce, Rutledge**

"This is a wonderful thing for our Chambers, CVBs and individual attractions all across the state. When we get the news out about our region, the economic impact rolls over and is felt in all counties. There are so many tourism opportunities in this state. This is a great way to get it out in front of travelers, and our local residents, as well." **Sheree Taylor, Executive Director – South Central Tennessee Tourism Association, Pulaski**

"Great meeting and another home run for the Bredesen team! The addition of the News Bureau will benefit everyone who takes advantage of it. The Memphis tourism bureau believes in the combined power of media coverage and paid advertising (one doesn't work without the other) to back it up. There's no better way to get the word out about Tennessee than developing media relations which helps us build the economic revenue our state benefits from through the tourism industry." **Regina Bearden, Vice President Marketing – Memphis Convention and Visitors Bureau**

#

RACHEL JACKSON BUILDING, 5TH FLOOR
320 SIXTH AVENUE NORTH
NASHVILLE, TN 37243
615.741.9001